

# Ideals of Strength

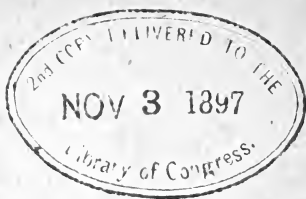
JOHN WATSON (*Jan MacLaren*)

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**IDEALS OF STRENGTH.**



# IDEALS OF STRENGTH

BY  
JOHN WATSON  
(IAN MACLAREN)

*Author of "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," "Home  
Making," Etc.*

TOGETHER WITH A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE



NEW YORK  
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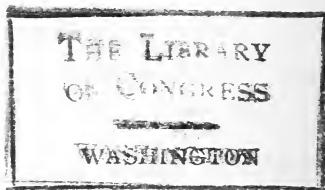
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## JOHN WATSON.

(IAN MACLAREN.)

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The Rev. John Watson M. A., better known as Ian Maclaren, was born in Mannintree, Essex, England, in 1850. He is, however, a pure Scot. It is related that while yet young the family removed to London. Some years of his childhood life were spent at Perth and Stirling. His parents were decidedly religious, with strong and positive con-

victions. His father was a faithful elder of the Free Church of Scotland and highly respected. His mother possessed aversions equally strong with her convictions. With a kind spirit that was proverbial, and the record of a life unaffected by class distinctions, and abundant in ministrations to those in trouble, she was lamented at death, and keen was the loss and affection felt for her. Both parents were eminently worthy. Mr. Watson was educated at the University of Edinburgh. He also pursued studies at Tübingen. Among his early school associates were names that have become

famous, as Henry Drummond, James Stalker, Robert Louis Stevenson and George Adam Smith. Mr. Watson has said that Scott was the first writer who left any impression on his mind, which author he read eagerly. "Four authors he singles out as masters, Scott, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold and Seely, the author of *Ecce Homo*." He entered the University of the Free Church of Scotland and became assistant pastor of Dr. J. H. Wilson, of the Barclay Church, Edinburgh. A year later he became the minister of the Free Church of Logiealmond, in Perthshire. For two-and-a-half years he remained there.

Perthshire, has been rendered famous, and now well-known as "Drumtochty," to which frequent references are made in his published works. An uncle had been minister there before the "Disruption" in 1843. His literary plans for many years (from the time he was at Logiealmond), were akin to those completed twenty years later. The modesty of Mr. Watson and a natural distrust led to the abandonment, for all these years, of his earlier ideals. Such was his brilliancy and popularity as a preacher, that his fame spread, and invitations came urging him to leave the quiet parish of Logiealmond on the borders

of the Highlands, which was half Highland and half Lowland. He accepted an invitation from the St. Matthew's Church in Glasgow to be colleague to Dr. Samuel Miller. Subsequently, three years later, he was called to the Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool, where he has, with great acceptability and success, held its pastorate for seventeen years. There is no church in Liverpool, with a larger or more influential congregation. Of him Mr. W. Robertson Nicholl writes and echoes a universal sentiment, "There cannot be much hesitation in saying that among English preachers of the younger gen-

eration Mr. Watson holds a foremost, if not the first place."

It was upon the appearance of his inimitable work, "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," in 1894, that his skill and power in the literary world became famous. The sales of this work in a single year have exceeded 100,000 copies. Mr. Watson was once asked, what suggested to him the picturesque title of his book,—"Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush."

"The title" he replied, "is based on a verse of Scotch poetry, which I have printed on the inner page of the title:

There grows a bonnie brier bush  
In our kail-yard.

I meant the title to indicate that as brier bushes grow in humble cottage gardens, so the virtues flourish in very humble lives. A number of people have misunderstood the title. Some like it very much, others disapprove of it. I think, however, they would like it if they understood it."

When asked "what suggested the idea of the book to you?" he said: "Well, I have always been interested in the study of Scotch character, and used to lecture on it a long time ago, but have not looked at the lectures since. The real reason, however, why I wrote the sketches was that

Dr. Nicholl asked me to do so. That seems rather a bald explanation, but it is the true one. As far as I know, I should never have written them without that request. Of course I could not have written them unless I knew the particular type of life very well."

He has written many works on philosophy and theology. He accepted an invitation to deliver the Lyman-Beecher Lectures to the theological students of Yale, at New Haven in 1896. The Lectures have been published and are full of pertinent and wholesome truths. He also lectured in the principal cities of the



United States, being intensely popular.

Of Mr. Watson's appearance Dr. J. M. Buckley writes, "He appears like a man in full vigor, accustomed to the open air, to considerable exercise and when dressed for travel has an unclerical though not an anticlerical aspect. On the platform, however, he resembles the modern type of the English dissenting minister of the Calvinistic denominations. His voice is of the more ancient ministerial type, approximating a drawl, the upward inflection with a tendency to the minor key and a pronounced rhythm."

His apt descriptions, his

pathetic recitals, his tender utterances, assert his power to the unbiased critic.

He has been surprised at the famous effect his stories have wrought and is full of delight and appreciation that such marked approbation has been accorded him for them. Mr. Watson as preacher, expositor, novelist and lecturer, stands as one of superior power and rare qualities. In all these varied parts and gifts he is a man of distinguished ability. It was indicative of the character of the man that he should still have retained his picturesque *nom deplume* on the title-page of his book, instead of announcing it as the

work of Rev. John Watson, the name by which his friends best know him. Concerning his *nom deplume* it may be said that "*Ian*" is Scottish for John, his own name, and the "*Maclaren*" was his mother's name which he thus memorializes. On making an address in Brooklyn, Mr. Watson made some remarks with reference to the pronunciation of the name "*Ian*." "I would say," he remarked, "that if you want to pronounce it like an Englishman you will say I-an, if like a Scotchman Ee-an, and if like a Highlander Ee-on."

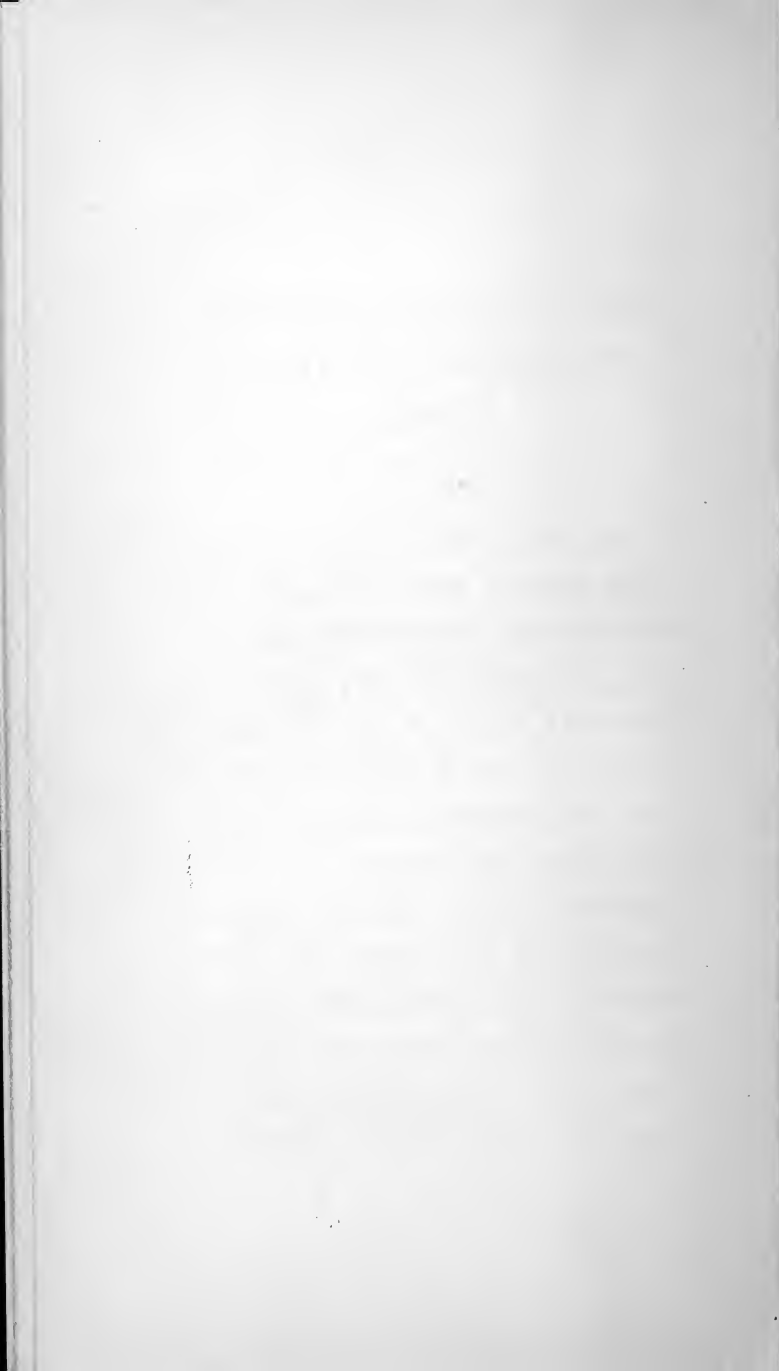
Mr. Watson is ever busy, a very energetic worker, "he

never loiters, he never trifles, but has always everything in strict order."

Such are a few of the many facts in the life peculiarities of one whose works are of exalted merit, whose efforts will be recorded among the noble, whose name will be heralded as one of the worthies—an immortal name that is not born to die.

THE FOLLY OF STIFLING  
RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS.

“Quench not the Spirit.” I Thessa-  
lonians 5 : 19.



## THE FOLLY OF STIFLING RELIGIOUS CONVIC- TIONS.

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Accurate scholars point out with perfect truth that when St. Paul gave the solemn warning "quench not the Spirit" to the Christians at Thessalonica, he was not referring, in the first instance, so much to religious convictions as to spiritual gifts. Those were days when the Spirit of Almighty God burned like a fire in the bones of men, and when they spoke because they were not able to be silent. Proph-

ets arose in the little Christian communities, who felt as if they had a message to the world, and, come what might, must deliver it. The Apostle was anxious that these deliverances of humble prophets should not be ignored or despised. No doubt they might speak when they ought rather to have been silent: they might also sometimes say things not worth the saying, but the Apostle thought it was better to bear the burden of too much hearing rather than to risk the loss of some prophecies. You must take so much quartz in order to extract the few grains of gold, and the man who listened



would be recompensed for much speaking by occasionally a beautiful gleam of divine revelation. The Spirit of God does dwell in a believing and clean heart, the oracle within the heart of a believing man does sometimes stir and move him to speak, and the thing which he then says is a message to his day and generation from one who is living in the fellowship of God. It is a poor little tape that struggles down from the electric machine, but yet upon that tape, in strange and jagged characters, is the message that has flashed from a remote corner of the world. And so these uncultured men gave

out, sometimes, their words in rude and ungrammatical speech, but yet it was something they had to say to men's hearts.

What the Apostle says about this has a wide range. If, through worldly indifference and intellectual scorn, we despise the revelation that comes by unlearned lips to us, then we have done our best to quench the Spirit of God. But what the Apostle says has a very much more sacred application, from which none of us can escape, and which I desire to impress upon your lives. The Spirit of God did not simply rest upon the prophets and Apostles so that

they opened their mouths and spake the will of God. The almighty and merciful Spirit of God has had a vaster and more extended sphere, since there was a human race on earth; and through the checkered history of humanity, that Spirit has been striving with human hearts, and is struggling and striving in our hearts to-day, however careless and thoughtless.

What I mean is the one unwearied and Divine influence has been inside our hearts ever since we were born, restraining us from irrevocable excesses of sin, reinforcing the spiritual instincts of the heart when they were heavy and dull,

sustaining the solitary voice of conscience, awakening within us at different times pathetic memories of the Father's house, and giving us what is the sweetest and holiest desires we shall ever have—the desire to return to our Father's love.

Sometime, on an evening, we have stood and looked at the midnight sky, and as we saw the moon and the stars we have thought they also shone upon our fathers. And our fathers' eyes looked upon them, and so in the heart of our fathers moved the same influence that is moving now in ours, in childhood, in manhood, and so on to old age, and

which we may well pray may never forsake our hearts. It is unfortunate that most of us are so unconscious of the most profound and spiritual facts ; and that perhaps few of us have ever realized that God has been within us, and moving us to our salvation. We have thought of Him as waiting for us in His heaven ; we have thought of Him as coming down in the mission of Jesus, His Son, to get into touch with human souls. We have thought of him as speaking by the blessed Gospels, and His voice as pouring within our ears a truth far deeper and truer than we understood. That great figure in the Rev-

elation where the Almighty is represented as standing at the door of the human heart and knocking—how true, how anxious, how wistful, how patient!

We have understood that if our hands be but stretched out to the latch, and the latch, by the human will be lifted, and there be but an inch of room, that the grace of God should come in, to our repentance and faith. How true! But have we ever said to ourselves, "He that is without has also been within?" It is so difficult to our minds to imagine the unspeakable love of the Almighty. All you can do is to take one facet of the gem and

look at it, and then turn it to another ; take one figure, drop it, and then go to another. It is true that the Father waits until the son bethinks himself and returns. But it is also true He pursues him into the far country, and makes it miserable there. And more than that, the Eternal love stirs in the heart of man as the Spirit brooding on the black and sullen waters, bringing out before his eyes the sight of the old homestead, the expression of his Father's face, the motion of happy servants that come and go where there is enough to spare ; till at last he brings the resolution to the birth and says : "I will arise and go

to my Father." And the God that receives him was the God that moved him.

I do venture to think that within your hearts you have sometimes felt this, one way or another. You have been, for instance, shocked out of your sense of perfection. You have had your habit of self-confidence broken. You have seen the stains of your soul just look black before sinking out of sight. You have been penitent and ashamed, longing to be forgiven and cleansed. Do you know anyone just like that? Or, death came un-awares, and took away one that was young. You saw the still and calm face; felt



that moment as if you were lying there; you imagined yourself in another world and said: "How shall it be with my soul?" And then your heart failed in you, and you were inclined to kneel and say, "Bless me, even me also, O my Father." Your life lost its freshness and its greenness; pleasures had not their relish, blessings had not their attraction, you were desolate for want of a sight of the Lord Jesus, insulted, scourged, crucified, dying for sins that were not His own. And of a sudden, as by the touch of an enchanter's wand, kindled springs of healing in your heart, and you felt yourself

drawn, as the magnet draws, to the cross of Christ. One way or another, some way, it does not matter which, what was it? Did you say a Preacher? Did you say a "Sermon?" Did you say "a fancy?" Did you talk it away? Did you laugh it off? Did you never guess that all this was the love of the Almighty moving within your heart? O beautiful thought, that God should have been within us, and left within us the signs of His presence. I mean you, the person that has felt it. Do you not think so? I seem as if I am in contact now with single human souls. You did not think so: you said it was not

beautiful, you said you would rather not have had it. Before, you were contented, satisfied; you did all you wanted, you had rather that you had been left alone; you would rather be as you were before. Do you say so? I answer, all merciful the disturbance of the human life, all merciful the misery of a human heart; and I say that in trying to overcome this motion of the Divine love within the depths of your being, you are engaged in a vain and fruitless task. You do not know how much you have lost, you have no conception how much you are loved. You do not know the patience of the Almighty.

You do not know the exuberant energy of the Divine Spirit. What a love, to cling to us and to refuse to let us go! What a love that has stood out all our resistance! It has been like this. Have you ever seen a young child in its nurse's arms? Why, when the child was tired and sleepy, would it not lie down and sleep? I am sure no person can tell. But what it did was to fling itself back, and refuse to rest. And the nurse let it sob, held it firmly, till at last it rested. Why, it might have rested sooner! And so it is with this soul of yours.

We cannot overcome the persuasion and the resistance

of the Divine love. All this struggling in your souls is only the wrestling against the very arms of love, that will hold you, I hope, unto your salvation. When you try to persuade a person that the Divine Love will receive him, however unloving, and that the Divine pity will rest on him however unworthy,—oh, I have been thankful I have been a poor physician of human souls. There are many ways of giving to a human spirit the healing balm of God's salvation. You can, for instance, say that God is love, and that righteousness and power and wisdom and judgment are all fused and

harmonized in love. You can point to the mission of the Lord Jesus, and say that Galilee and Gethsemane and Calvary and the Resurrection are all the Gospel of love. You can ask the man whether, in his own love, he has not had a mighty and merciful providence which raised him up and hedged him from sin. And all these ways point him to the heavenly kingdom. But I do think this is a mere conventional argument to any person who is afraid of his reception at the hands of the Almighty. How is it that you wanted to return? Why did you want to be forgiven, to be cleansed, to be loved, to

be friends with God? Now, are there not men and women here that would give much to be friends with God? We say, whenever any extraordinary thought crosses our mind, "That is remarkable, that did not come from me, I was unconscious of it: I was for the moment inspired." Whenever that want is in the human heart, I say, "Here is a prophecy of the kingdom of the Almighty." Here is the evangel of his love. It is just the spirit smiting the hard heart till it turns into a well of water. Now let me speak to this individual. Have you never been perplexed and dismayed by the commotion in

your heart? Have you been dimly conscious it was God? And then have you felt you would wish to free yourself from the restraining influence, just that you might be as before, just that you might have the old peace? Have you ever done this in the days of old? When you were children, as you went along through the park, has your eye been attracted by a tiny jet of water springing up among the green grass? You said, "It is a spring." And then because you had nothing to do in those happy days, you said, "I will cover it up, and keep the spring down." You have gathered leaves, and



earth and stones and built a compact house and said: "No more water from that poor spring will ever get out of that prison." By and by the earth loosened and fell and crumbled away before the irresistible stream of gentle water. It is impossible to restrain the power of nature, and almost impossible to restrain the love of God. I wish I could say, for my own sake and yours, that I could say, entirely impossible. I cannot tell with what longing of heart I wish to believe that no human heart can resist the love of the Almighty; but I have before me the facts of human life. I have before me its ex-

periences. It appears to me that we have the power of resisting the Divine love, a power that is perfectly awful. How do I know? Because people have done it. Because sitting in the pews here to-day there are people who have done it. You have been able to forget the voice of God. You have been able to loosen that affectionate pressure of the Divine hand, you have been able to obliterate the agitation of the Divine love. You are to-day as much engaged with business, and as entirely hopeful, your pleasure is the same to you as it was before that moment when

God was stirring you. You have got relief.

There are victories that are worse than ten defeats, victories that with clearer eyes we shall regard with vain regret. "Oh to be free from the anxieties and longings of the soul that are despicable! I was never in such a state before, and the sooner it is ended the better. Oh to be free from the pain of a sick soul! I tell you there is something worse than pain, and that is the absence of pain. Just now, as you said, "When will it end? For this is as unreal to me as anything I ever heard." Have you ever thought that the absence of it is worse? When

a man lying on his bed is racked in agony we pity, and we stand by his side, and take his hand, and say "We hope you may have strength to be patient." It is far more pitiable next morning when we come, and he says, "This morning, suddenly the pain disappeared, and I am now quite well." Quite well, with the sunken circle beneath the eye, and death's pale ensigns upon his cheek. That is the most pitiable of all. Outside the door, when the door is closed upon him, we look at the physician, and he shakes his head.

"Yes, mortification has set in." We thought so. It

was the beginning of the end.

Oh ! the absence of religious conviction is the most awful thing in human history. It is the insensibility of the soul. We are capable—take this in, and carry it away with you now—capable of spiritual suicide. It is given to us to refuse the Spirit of God or to yield to it.

I say it again, it is a hard task. No words can describe how the Spirit of God can endure rebuff, refusal, insult, outrage, and cling to a human heart as a mother clings to a prodigal son. If He leaves He leaves because He cannot stay : if He leaves, He leaves

because He wishes to return.

The Eternal Love is ever the same. I never preached otherwise, I hope I never shall. But the power of responding may die from out your soul. There is to each of us given, as I take it, a capacity for religious feeling: a capacity for faith, for repentance, for love. We can squander it by wilful neglect and wanton reasoning. You say then the Spirit of God is quenched. Yes, but what does it mean? It means that your own spirit, the only power that can respond to it, is quenched within you. You have destroyed it, and it is over. Now it is peace.

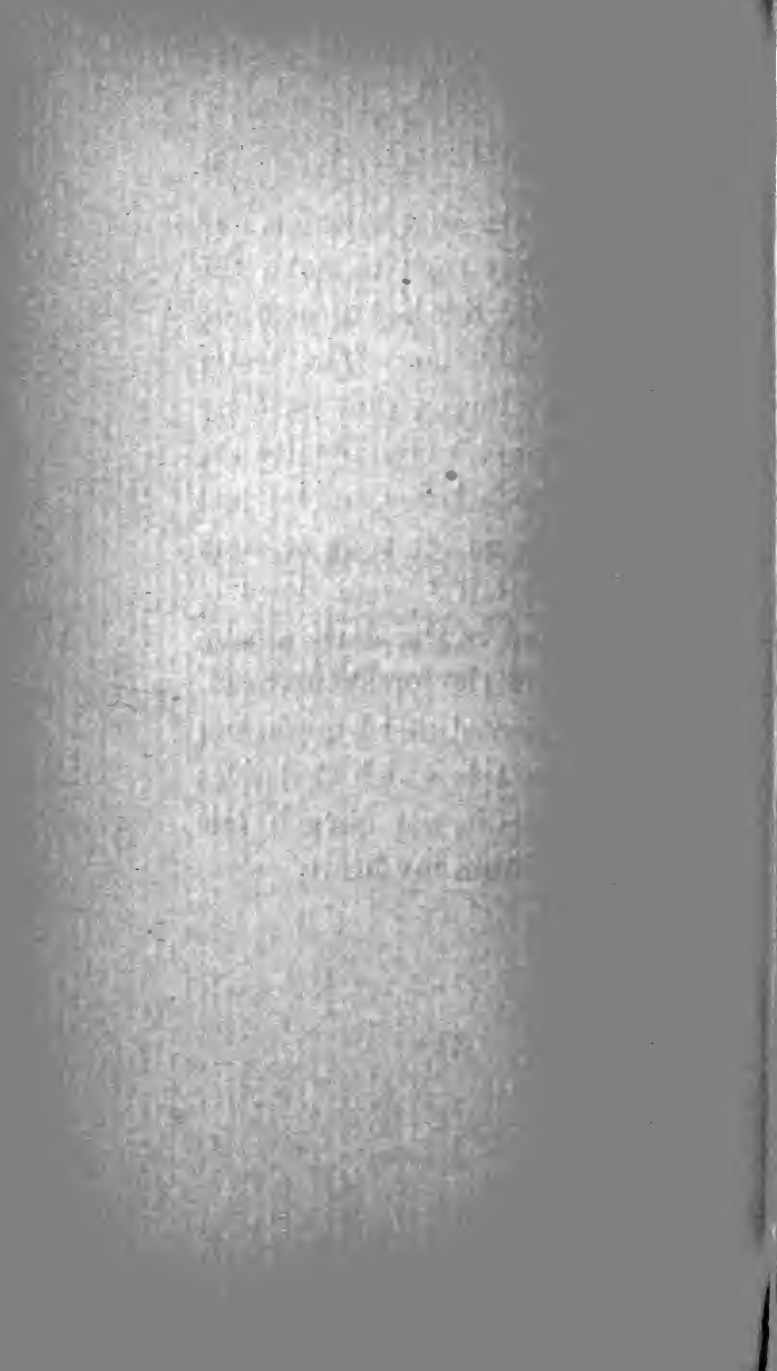
You will not think about this when you leave the subject, not once ; it will have no more effect upon you than a zephyr. When the wood is green, you put it into the fire, and it burns. You take up the charred branch after that, but you can never light it again. Abandoned of the Almighty ! But how ? With his love just breaking over you, in the sadness of utter despair.

“ Beyond me,” you say, because you do not know it, you are unconscious of it. Years ago on a summer afternoon, I stood on a little harbor wall and saw two vessels trying to make the entrance. They were lying in a narrow chan-

nel, and, since there was not water enough to keep them up, they were lying on their side. But far out the tide began to turn, and one wave after another passed under them, and every wave in the channel the water deeper, and I saw in a little while that the water was twelve feet deep in the harbor, and the green, foaming waves rushed in like a mill-race. I looked again toward the narrow passage, and saw on one vessel that they had taken advantage of the wind at the right moment, and on that first vessel they floated in on the full tide. Upon the other vessel they were not on the alert, though sailors do not

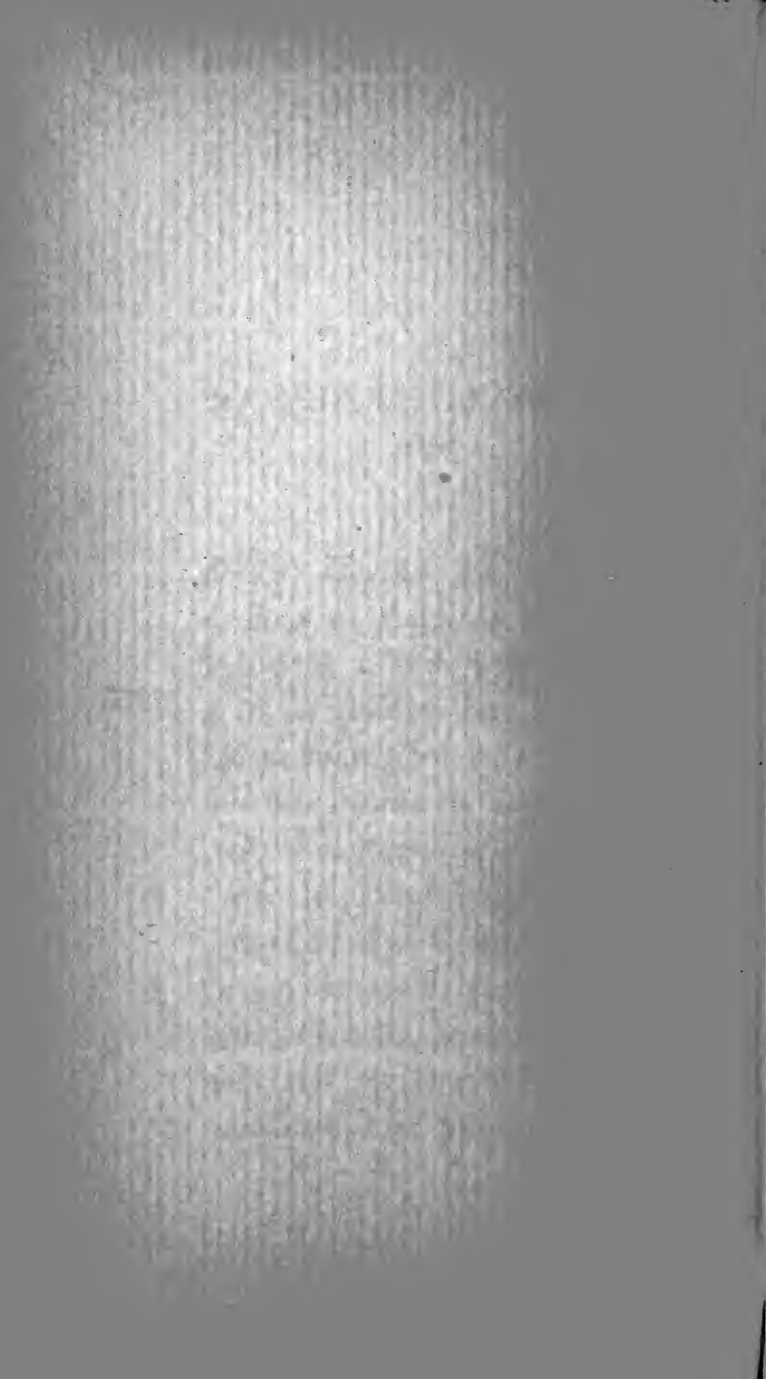


often make that mistake, and when they tried to make the harbor the tide had turned, and they could not. The water grew shallower, they gave up the attempt, and gradually the vessel heeled over, and lay just as before on the bank of sand. At nightfall I went down again, and in the dark gloaming I saw the forsaken vessel, and I prayed that I might not miss the tide which God gives to our souls, nor quench His Spirit within my heart.



## THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

“Exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day : lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”  
Heb. 3 : 13.



## THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

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There are phrases which light up a subject as a flash of lightning does a darkened country, and embody, as in a word, what we cannot reveal with much speaking, and one of these happy strokes is this, "the deceitfulness of sin." Sin, as most of us have found, is not only most masterful and dangerous, most disgraceful and degrading, but also most cunning and insidious.

It lies in wait for us at shady corners of our life, and garottes us before we have the chance of resistance or any possibility of escape. It dogs us with stealthy tread, like the step of a Red Indian, it hides itself behind familiar and innocent circumstances, it allures us from the solid pathway of virtue with all kinds of devices, and then, like a will-o'-the-wisp, plunges us into the morass. It holds out to our too eager appetite various excellences, and then afterwards fills our mouth with the apples of Sodom. What I mean is this : I never feel as if I had a chance all my life of a fair, stand-up battle with

any sin. Sin has always taken men at a disadvantage. We are perpetually being led into traps, and overtaken by surprises, and baffled in various ways. Our strong points, I appeal to any of you who ever studied our spiritual powers, are continually discounted and outgeneralled, our weaknesses are noticed and undermined. Every day I live the conviction comes more strongly to my mind—although I cannot in any way explain it—that behind all these stratagems and these temptations that come and go with an awful sensibleness and appearance of cunning, there must be one Personal

Power and one Evil Intelligence with whom I am fearfully and blindly wrestling for the holiness of my life and the safety of my soul.

It would, perhaps, be impossible for any of us to agree upon a particular sin as most dangerous, but I may say there cannot be two opinions about the sin, of all the masterful and deadly sins, which is most insidious, and has the most cunning approaches, although in the end its results be awful and disastrous. You see, there are sins which just fairly grip you of a sudden, you have a hand-to-hand tussle and the result is crowned victor or a disgraced victim.



I could mention such a sin ; it is not necessary. But intemperance very rarely takes hold of a man like that. If intemperance ever does, it is because the man's father drank, and the alcoholic taint is in his veins, and then he falls quite suddenly, or because he is placed to a peculiar disadvantage. Peculiarly intemperance comes with masked and unsuspected beginnings, and if you afterwards said to a man, "Where did you begin?" he would not be able to identify the start. Young children full of the excitement and heat of animal spirits, are offered wine when they are too young to resist. I do not care to be

dogmatic in this place about the various circumstances of social life, but at once I shall go the length of saying that to give children wine is something approaching a dastardly sin. Women with fine sensibilities and highly-strung temperaments are ordered stimulants during critical circumstances of their lives, and they acquire a habit which, in the end, becomes their master. Young men serve their time in offices where the principals are not so careful as they should be about this thing, and where other young men go out two or three times a day to the bar, and they begin to go also. Bargains are made

in some lines of business, over refreshments, which could not otherwise be made, or would not be made, as one has told me, at such a profit. And so the man gets his present profit and lays the foundation of his future moral wreck. Gentlemen take wine without reserve at dinner; some of whom are old enough to know better, some of whom are too young ever to have begun, others are not content with a legitimate use at meal-times, but must go to a restaurant during the day for pleasure or for business. I believe that number is growing smaller, I believe the day is coming when the finger of scorn will be pointed

at a man who will go out from his place for no other purpose than that of drinking. Now, mark you, I am not saying a word just now in regard to intemperance. I am pointing out boldly how innocent and moderate drinking prepares the way. The enemy comes to us under the form of business relationships and good fellowship, and with all the innocent and familiar circumstances of life. We take him by the hand, for he wears at that time a pleasant face. We domesticate him in our life and home, and afterward find ourselves in the grip of a tiger. It is the secrecy of his first approach, it is the gentleness of

the descent I am now wishing to drive home on the minds of those who are still young people, and also on others. If you see an old acquaintance, and an early and honored one, disgracing himself in the face of society, then, for the sake of charity, and for the sake of your own safety, remember this—he, perhaps, learned it first from you and me. And now suppose the two of you could go back on the path together, you could not tell the spot where the two roads diverged and where one took the fatal turn.

You cannot help noticing that although this sin is not fastidious about its victims,

and will take the lowest and coarsest, like the prowling tiger, it has won the most unexpected successes with high and gentle spirits. It is not those who are repulsive and unloved that have fallen most ready victims to intemperance. Some of the meanest wretches that walk the streets, whatever may be their follies, seem to be proof against this temptation. No; it is men who are lovable—and men whom we have loved, who have had high instincts, and have had noble hearts, who would not do a person a bad turn, who have many beautiful accomplishments. Taking advantage as I argue, and believe to be the

case, taking advantage of their facile good-nature, of their genial popularity, of their very heartiness, this sin stalks them to the death, just as a noble animal of the chase is marked out through his very beauty, by the marksmen on every side. You must know some friend of yours to whom this happened. You loved him, and everybody loved him. Well, when he fell how sorry we were, we would rather have seen twelve other men fall than that man. We gave him his chance, we rallied around him. He was restored, he fell again—he fell again—he fell again; till the handsome face lost the stamp of its nobility, and the bright

and refined nature grew fleshly and coarse. Yet to the end his heart was so kind that it would respond to the merest touch of friendship, and he had moments of self-reproach which were almost an atonement. We said of him, as our hearts bled, "he was his own worst enemy."

Perhaps, you now think, some of you, that I have fairly launched on the sea of temperance speaking. You say, "I know plenty of men who are tolerably free livers, and are robust in health." Will you now let me state my point definitely? I am not here to say there is no alternative between a man being an absolute



abstainer and a downright drunkard. I am not here to say that because a man uses this thing carefully he will certainly be in more danger than if he did not use it at all, any more than a man who swims is more likely to be drowned than a man who of his own free will never leaves the dry land. I want to make a protest, which I think I may utter, against those rash statements, such as that a moderate drinker is a greater pest, and a more dangerous man, than an absolute drunkard. He is not so physically, he is not so morally, he is not so socially. It is simply sheer nonsense. May I hope now,

finally, that we have done with it? But my point is this, that if a man leaves the path of a most conscientious and steady moderation, there is no saying that he may not speedily land in the depths. "I know men who could not be called moderate, in any pulpit sense, and to-day they are not ruined." This you may say, and I ask, how old are they? "About forty," you say. Yes: your case is too young yet, it is just in process. Just now that man has business cares, he has to make his fortune, he has great responsibilities, he is restrained and coerced by the circumstances of life. Give him twenty years of free

living, will his will be as clear then, when he is sixty? When he has made his fortune, he is free from business. I would give nothing for him then, when, with a relaxed discipline, as an old man he strips and enters the arena. Ah! this is the testing point. Pitiab!e that he should break down when he is old and should have been preparing himself to break down for twenty years, when you were standing round and saying how safe he is.

I will take an illustration from another city for obvious reasons, and I do not think the case can be identified here. If it is, alas! it does not mat-

ter. When I lived in that city one of the great professions was conspicuously headed by a man of the most remarkable ability and distinguished fame. His name and position were so great that he could command all the important business that fell within his province, and all that he did, he did most earnestly. He was a leading member of the Scottish church, he was a darling in society, he was a great collector of rare books. All the time habits of excess were eating into the moral and intellectual being of the man, and while outwardly the trunk stood, it was entirely rotten within. Years ago he had to

come down from the position he so nobly filled, he was ignored and passed by in the work he used to be the only one to do, and when last I heard of him, that once most honored and conspicuous name was covered with obscurity.

Young and strong, but by and by you will be old. How do you know that what you can do just now in this way, you shall be able to do with absolute safety afterwards? You are simply domesticating a tiger-cub, and now you play with it and show it tricks, by and by it will turn and rend you. The one reason, friends, why we have to guard against this sin with such extraordi-

nary care, is the fact that it, of all sins, insinuates itself into the fibre of the nature. And immediately it begins to affect the character. Do not think of it as a robe that may have been slipped over you, and when it grows uncomfortable you will fling it off. It is a garment like that Hercules wore, it is soaked in every thread and fibre with poison, and the poison will soon begin to go into your system. What I mean is this, it does not matter how honorable and straightforward a gentleman is before he falls beneath the power of this vice. You are as simple as a child if you expect that in a year after, in that man,

the very elements of virtue or of strength will remain. You know that is true, you know that there are men whose foreheads would once have mantled with a genuine blush if charged with falsehood, they would deny a fact now and look into your eye. And you know that that man will condescend to the low, despicable cunning of a savage, no ingenuity has ever been discovered short of absolute confinement that will restrain that man from ruining himself, and he will practise any amount of deceit to obtain the poison which is his destruction.

His character begins just

simply to crumble away like the foundation of a house when the water is running beneath it. I am putting a question to you. Is it not a certainty—I never knew an exception, never—that you cannot depend upon the word of a man who has fallen under the power of this vice ! Friends, it is now the victim's will that is to blame. You just look back over your life and try to see if my words are not true. I will give you this little bit of personal history, although I am bound to say it can be no new thing to you, your own memory will be awakened by it, unless your family and friends have been



different from every other man's society. One of my few early friends was the son of a good man who held a high position. That boy is now a tramp and a vagabond upon the face of the earth. And if he is living, he will sooner or later come to my house, for he comes to the house of all his old friends, just to get bread. He will go away again, and I tell you his case is hopeless. Give him a little bread, a few clothes, he goes away on the weary track again. At the old Scotch grammar school where I was preparing for the university, we fought like Scottish lads, hardly, for our honors. I struggled for the

second place ; a lad bright in intellect as he was strong of body, could easily have taken it, but by kind good nature he allowed me to share the second place with him. We went together to the University, both of us studied for the church. In two years he left and went away, although of course we expected his career to be very brilliant. The gayety of the University had proved too much for him. I had a private tutor. He not only drilled me in my Latin composition, but he was one of the first men that gave me a love of letters. He was kindness itself to me, and I loved him. By and by he re-

ceived a parish. He used to preach ably and effectively, and became very popular. He is not in that parish now, he is not in the church now.

One of my college professors was a man of genial disposition, and a splendid student, but the same enemy was too much for him. He was a good and sincere man, and an able theologian. He does not hold the chair now, he is not in this country. I see them one by one pass to oblivion, with a cloud upon their names.

I apologise. I would not have given a chapter of personal history, were it not that you have, many of you, read it at one time or another.

Your own friends, your boy intimates at school, your fellow clerks—where are they all now? How many of them are living? How many are dead? What did they die of? Clerks that used to be in your first office, your old partner, the man you met in your business,—are there none of their names that occur to you now?

This sin comes into a house like a serpent. We can keep out any other sin, not this one. Your child, the little fellow that used to sit beside you, who used to nestle against you in the church. You see his face to-night; do you know where he is? He whom you

loved, now an outcast. You are silent.

What do you propose to do to counteract and destroy this terrible thing, the evil that is eating out the life of the middle class. I say nothing of other classes. Have you any plan? Oh, you must have some plan—you must have some. What do you propose to do to save your children from the power of this vice? How do you propose to save your friend? Are you just going to let him slip? How do you propose to save yourself? I do not think any one plan will do ; I believe you will have to try one, or two or three plans. It is worth all your thought, all your trou-

ble, all your pain. If you could rescue one single man or woman, although it is just about hopeless, rescue them. Try. If you could rescue one man or woman, it would be the greatest achievement of your life. Are you going to fight this evil for yourself? Is there a man here who has to fight it for himself? Then let me say, do not depend on your strength, for this is the deadliest enemy any human being ever had to face.

Young men, will you begin to reason? For I am terrified when I see a young man who does not reason, and, with a blinded, darkened vision, goes as thousands before him have

gone. I seem to see him under the hand of the destroyer. I know a few men who have been arrested upon their course, and turned to glorify the power of God's name. Take care where you go, and with whom. There are sights in every city that would ruin an angel if possible. There are men who have been dragged down before my eyes. I saw them dragged, and could not see what hand was below the water, and I asked for the cause. It was their "set" which ruined them. I understood it then. And above all things, remember this—Christ nailed the serpent head of every sin to His own Cross,

and He lives to-day to help every man and woman to be delivered from sin, and to give them final victory.





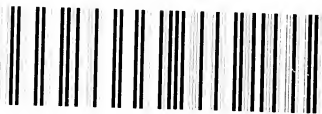
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